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Weekly Summary

Special Report

The 28th UN General Assembly

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THE 28th UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Summary

The 28th General Assembly, which convened this week, will devote much of its time to going over familiar ground. The reluctance of the major powers to bring new matters before a forum they find increasingly hostile and the determination of the nonaligned states to publicize their standard litany of grievances will force the assembly to return to long-staledated issues. The nonaligned states are primarily interested in obtaining commitments for greater economic assistance from the developed nations and censure of Israel and the white African regimes. The Korean question, a veteran of more than 20 years on the agenda, will be the only major East-West issue coming before a session otherwise likely to be marked by considerable superpower cooperation. This cooperation has brought the easy approval of one new and important item: membership for the two Germanies. The growing and more aggressive voting majority of the nonaligned will accentuate both these tendencies of great power disinterest and non-aligned activism; the 28th session is thus likely to see further confirmation of the trend toward "North-South" polarization of the UN. The assembly will also be called upon again to deal with terrorism, the UN's financial problems, and various proposals for new disarmament mechanisms.

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The Korean Problem

Korea will provide the only major contest between East and West, and one of the few issues on which the Soviet Union and China will stand together. In past years, this confrontation has taken place in the 25 member General Committee, which meets at the beginning of each session to determine the assembly agenda. This year, however, South Korea has indicated in advance that it will not oppose inclusion of the Korean question on the agenda or North Korea's participation in the debate. South Korea has also announced that it will accept the dissolution of the UN Commission on the Unification and Rehabilitation in Korea. Thus, the assembly seems certain to take up the question of Korea and to dissolve the Korean commission.



Kwon Min Jun
First North Korean observer at UN

One issue of debate will be whether the Koreans should eventually have dual membership in the UN or a single seat, as North Korea insists. Controversy will focus, however, on the future of the UN Command, which enforces the Korean armistice as an agent of the Security Council. Although US forces remain in South Korea under the UN Command, a bilateral treaty of 1954 authorizes their presence and would continue in effect even if the command were disbanded. The US will cosponsor a resolution recommending dissolution of the commission but preservation of the command; Algeria, along with the Soviet Union, China, and other allies of North Korea will offer an opposing resolution calling for the dismantling of the UN Command and the removal of all foreign troops. Even if approved, the Algerian resolution would have little immediate impact because the Security Council must act to disband the UN Command. Nevertheless, it would mark an important psychological defeat for the West and a dramatic swing of majority support to the North Korean position. The vote is expected to be close.

German and Other Membership Questions

Approval of membership for the two Germanies—which was quickly passed during Tuesday's opening session—will be one of the most important acts of the 28th assembly and one of the clearest demonstrations of East-West cooperation. The US, USSR, Britain, and France had carefully planned the entry of the two Germanies—which the Security Council approved this summer—to avoid reference to contentious issues such as the status of Berlin. The vote on German membership proceeded as smoothly as that of the Bahamas, which was offered at the same time.

German membership will bring into the UN two important industrial states at a time when the

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organization is becoming increasingly involved in international economic and financial questions. West Germany, in particular, is expected to provide new impetus for economic cooperation, which has tended to lag in recent years. The Germanies will also make a substantial addition to the impoverished UN budget. Their entry may renew the drive for universal membership—last acclaimed two years ago with the seating of the People's Republic of China—and may set an example for the other divided states, Korea and Vietnam.

Bangladesh membership may also be approved if agreements between India and Pakistan on exchanges of prisoners can be completed before the assembly adjourns in December. The only other membership issue before this session might be a decision on Cambodian credentials, if Prince Sihanouk succeeds in pressing his challenge of the Khmer delegation.

Another Middle East Debate?

After the debacle of this summer's Middle East review in the Security Council, there is little hope for any breakthroughs in the assembly. Secretary General Waldheim's recent visit to Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Egypt, and Jordan seems unlikely to provide the basis for a new initiative. The Arab states, however, will probably attempt to exploit the momentum generated by the actions of the Security Council, the International Civil Aviation Organization, and the nonaligned conference in censuring Israel for hijacking a Lebanese commercial aircraft. The assembly could provide the forum for another lengthy and bitter debate culminating in a resolution condemning Tel Aviv in language stronger than the threat of great power vetoes would permit in the Security Council. This may be one of several votes sponsored by the nonaligned states that will

leave the US isolated with an uncomfortably small minority of countries.

Passengers fleeing a hijacked plane destroyed in Libya



Further Efforts to Control Terrorism

Entangled with the Middle East confrontation, the agenda item on terrorism will also consume long hours of debate. Arguing that proposals to control terrorism are in fact directed against their cause, the Arab states, assisted by other nonaligned members, blocked all progress in a committee established by last year's assembly to recommend anti-terrorism policy. The problem will now be tossed back into the lap of the 28th assembly. The US and several West European states will try to gain approval of the Convention on the Protection of Diplomats. The substantive recommendations of this convention and of a Belgian proposal on the taking of hostages may,

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however, be lost among nonaligned contentions that violence is a justifiable tool of self-determination.

Measures Against Apartheid

The Africans also will tap the full voting strength of the nonaligned majority when they press for stronger measures against the white south African regimes. The US may again be condemned for importing Rhodesian chrome: a resolution that singled out the US for violating the sanctions against Rhodesia was killed by veto in the Security Council this summer but is likely to be approved by the assembly. The African offensive may also include requests for recogni-



Armed South African police at Carltonville where eleven workers were killed

tion of liberation movements in Portuguese-controlled areas of Africa and censure of alleged Portuguese massacres in Mozambique. There will also be a call to censure South Africa for alleged repression in Namibia. All have good prospects for approval. The recent shooting of mine workers by South African police will undoubtedly aid the black Africans' cause. There may also be efforts to endorse the Oslo Conference on Apartheid and Colonialism, which passed many recommendations unacceptable to the US.

Budget: Debts, Dollars, and Development

Consideration of the UN's perennially strained budget will raise several issues of political significance. Proposals will probably be made for abandoning the devalued dollar as the organization's primary unit of account and for collecting assessments partially in another currency such as Swiss francs. The \$9-million loss suffered by the UN during recent currency fluctuations and devaluations has created pressures for such reforms. Despite US opposition, substantial support could develop for dual-currency assessments.

The US will also resist efforts to reopen the issue of a maximum 25-percent assessment ceiling on the contribution of any one member state. Although this ceiling was approved in principle by last year's assembly, some nonaligned states may attempt to bar its implementation. A North-South confrontation can also be expected when developed states, the primary sources of revenue, support continuation of the austerity measures initiated last year by the secretariat. The less-developed states, the primary beneficiaries of UN expenditures, will argue against economy moves. Increased assistance programs will, in fact, be a primary goal of developing and nonaligned members this year. A scheduled review of the Economic and Social Council's second

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development decade will provide the occasion for various proposals for new and expanded programs. Among them may be resolutions asking developed states to contribute one percent of their national incomes to assistance, and the creation of a new fund for scientific and technical assistance.

Disarmament Proposals

Communist and nonaligned members can be expected to advance several disarmament proposals. Their purpose will be to gain parliamentary advantage—since these are among the most difficult initiatives to oppose—rather than realistically to expect any early reduction of arms. The Soviets will no doubt again urge preparations for a world disarmament conference, which they regard as a forum for offering new ideas on disarmament problems. A study committee established by last year's assembly was unable to agree upon even the terms for an initial meeting. This experience, along with US and Chinese opposition, may dampen enthusiasm for further steps toward such a conference. It is still possible, however, that the assembly will agree to reconstitute the study committee.

The Soviets are also likely to push for a repeat of last year's lopsided assembly endorsement of a resolution on non-use of force. This proposition has met strong Chinese opposition because of its close link with Soviet propaganda themes and because it allows for nuclear retaliation in the case of an attack with conventional arms—for example, a Chinese incursion over Soviet borders. The US and the Western camp in general abstained on the non-use of force resolution last year, maintaining that the resolution constituted a new interpretation of the obligations members assumed under the UN Charter. The Soviets may claim, however, that US signa-

ture of the Prevention of Nuclear War agreement at the June summit should lead to US support for the resolution. Yet another Soviet proposal on "strengthening international security" can also be expected. Intended as an anti-Western catch-all and couched in very general terms, the proposal has been endorsed by succeeding general assemblies without any effort toward implementation.

The assembly will also hear the annual report of the Geneva Disarmament Talks, which for the second consecutive year have made no significant progress. This report is certain to stimulate harsh criticism of the US and USSR, co-chairmen of the talks, whom the nonaligned states hold responsible for the lack of movement. Some members of the Geneva talks may try to initiate debate on the Comprehensive Test Ban. If they succeed, a focal point of discussion will be the conflict between nonaligned interest in indirect methods of verification and US insistence on on-the-spot verification.

The nonaligned states are also expected to attack the US, using the occasion of a secretariat report on the use of napalm and other incendiaries. If sufficient support is garnered, proposals may be made to ban these weapons.

Attitude of the Nonaligned States

The nonaligned states will be aggressive, as well as more united and adept in parliamentary procedures, when they press their grievances this fall. They may be particularly anxious to repay what they see as US inflexibility in vetoing three of their Security Council resolutions this year. Inspired by the recent nonaligned conference in Algiers, they will be prepared to use their strong majority in the assembly to argue their political and economic demands.

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One of their primary economic goals will be continued discussion of the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States, the product of the developing states' activities in the UN Conference on Trade and Development. Some of them hope to use this document to extend the obligations, under international law, of economically advanced states to help developing countries. The US and other developed countries, who abstained when the charter was originally approved, will urge consideration of a statement of economic principles rather than a legally binding document.



Yugoslav Ambassador Lazar Mojsov
Outspoken supporter of nonaligned

A similar North-South economic conflict will arise when the assembly assesses the Economic and Social Council's review of the UN's second development decade. Nonaligned states can be expected to resist Western efforts to include in the final statement the principle that, although the developing countries need external assistance, the primary responsibility for development rests upon the developing states themselves.

Special Report

The Role of the Chinese

During its two years of UN membership the People's Republic of China has used the General Assembly to spotlight its pose as champion of the



Chinese Delegation

underdeveloped states. China will continue to support many of their causes—particularly on issues of economic development, colonialism, and Peking's favorite theme of resisting superpower hegemony. The Chinese may, however, find their role as nonaligned champion complicated by their own interests as a great power. Peking is willing to sacrifice some of its influence among the non-aligned in order to pursue its own disputes with Moscow and protect vital Chinese interests. Disarmament issues will bring the conflict between Peking and Moscow into sharp focus: China will campaign against Soviet proposals for a World Disarmament Conference and non-use of force, both of which are favored by the nonaligned.

As an emerging great power, China also occasionally finds that it has less interest in using the General Assembly as a platform for venting

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grievances than as an arena for demonstrating that it is a responsible member of the world community. Peking thus prefers not to take positions on various nonaligned causes that attract little support from other nations. In the past, China has been able to abstain frequently, pleading that as a new member it had not yet formulated policy on all UN matters, but after two years of broadening its activities to all aspects of General Assembly work this defense will have limited value. Peking will meanwhile campaign, probably successfully, to accord Chinese the status of a UN working language—a measure representing an annual expense of approximately \$2.1 million, which some nonaligned states might prefer to direct to assistance programs.

Outlook 25X1

The inability of the General Assembly to generate significant action—which its 28th session seems about to confirm—is a malady shared by other UN organs. The Security Council, still dominated by the great powers, has ended many of this year's meetings deadlocked by a veto or the threat of one. During Secretary General Wald-

heim's tenure, the Secretariat has taken many initiatives but brought few to fruition. The role of the UN has become increasingly passive: it merely takes note of accomplished change—as the assembly will do when it acts on the Korean and German issues—and provides a forum for debate and measuring policy reaction. These functions are pale in comparison to the role of active participation in world affairs once envisaged for the UN.

If the assembly debates thus largely reflect the frustrations of the less developed in the face of what they see as great power inertia—and their own divisions—the assembly nevertheless points up that such frustrations are increasingly likely to pervade international affairs and will have to be taken into account by the industrialized powers. The assembly's function as a reflector of political realities will also be evident in the increased caucusing of the nine European Community states—a reflection of their recently reaffirmed intention to consult and coordinate foreign policy positions as they attempt to define a "European identity."

The General Assembly in Session

